

Lac Qui Parle Mission Church (Ruins)
Vicinity of Watson,
Minnesota.
Chippewa Co.

HABS No. MINN-1-2

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PHOTOGRAPH
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA
Minnesota District

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
CENTRAL UNIT - ST. LOUIS

Historic American Buildings Survey
Wm. G. Dorr, District Officer
702 Wesley Temple Bldg., Minneapolis, Minn.

LAC QUI PARLE MISSION CHURCH (RUINS)

Vicinity of Watson, Minnesota.

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Historical Data

Year of erection: 1841 - construction period extended over a year. On December 10, 1841, Mrs. Riggs writes that two services had been held in it, only one-half completed.

Built for (first owner): Presbyterian-Congregational Missionaries.

Architect or designer: Unknown.

Built by: Missionaries, Rev. Dr. T. S. Williamson and Rev. Stephen R. Riggs.

Original intended use: Church and school.

Notable events and occupants:

Consecration service. Dr. Williamson made a feast for the 100 Indian men who came. The floor was not yet in, so they sat on the sleepers. He served them potatoes, soup and bread. It was topped by the first church bell that ever rang in the Minnesota Valley. The bell had been purchased with money the Indian women earned by selling moccasins. In 1854 when fire destroyed two mission residences the families found refuge in the church.

Construction. Indian women dug out the place in the side hill where it was to stand, formed bricks which they sun dried, and helped with other manual labor. One woman wrote, "There are songs in our hearts because we are to have a place to worship the Good Spirit." The building was constructed bit by bit as money and material became available. \$150 was paid to two Canadians for sawing lumber with a whip saw. The remainder of the work was largely done by the two Missionaries and their helper, Jonas Pettijohn. Mr. Pettijohn had had considerable experience as a builder of log cabins in Illinois, therefore the construction supervision was probably left to him. Mrs. Riggs mentions him as a principal worker. The bricks were laid up into walls, boards sawed with a whip saw and shingles made from ash trees. The rains washed the sides so they were plastered on the inside and clapboarded on the outside. The woods were searched and researched for suitable materials. A movable partition made it possible to divide the church into two rooms. Perhaps this arrangement was made so that two classes could be conducted at one time. When the secretary of the Congregational Mission board visited them in 1854, after the fire, he was entertained in the church.

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Lac Qui Parle Mission Church (Ruins)

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Because the Indian Agency had been established at the mouth of the Yellow Medicine River, Rev. S. B. Treat thought it better to abandon the Lac Qui Parle station and move near to Rev. Williamson's station in that region. Therefore all the logs which Rev. Riggs had prepared for new buildings, the bell and other movable materials were taken to "Hazelwood", the new station near the agency. Dr. Williamson had moved there in 1851.

By Miss Edwina Gould, Chippewa County Historical Society,
Montevideo, Minnesota.

Prepared by



May 16, 1941

Charles E. Peterson,
Senior Landscape Architect.

TW 5/20/41